

**Testimony of David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations
Before the Planning and Development Committee – March 2, 2009**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I would like to express our appreciation for the comprehensive examination of smart growth strategies and concepts that this committee conducted this past year, the most comprehensive review that I'm aware of this General Assembly having performed.

We would like to submit the following comments on various bills on today's agenda:

Bill 6467 - AAC Smart Growth and Plans of Conservation and Development: We support your efforts, as reflected in Bill 6467 and others, to achieve as broad a consensus possible to better define and codify "smart growth". We would suggest that the word "and" in line 21 of Bill 6467 be changed to "or", or "and/or", or that that list of criteria be preceded by in line 7 by "...or promotes AT LEAST *(some number)* OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA...". Using the word "and" in line 21 might cause projects, which are subject to these criteria in other bills that refer to the criteria, to have to meet some of the criteria that are not directly relevant to them. For example, a desirable brownfields redevelopment project that is intended to house a clean technology company, municipal offices, and stores, and is in close proximity to, but does not include a housing component, might meet several other criteria, but would not meet criteria (E).

Bill 6464 - AAC Coordinated Preservation and Development. Although we support the concept of ensuring that state-funded projects are consistent with smart growth principles, and have supported criteria, for open space programs, that we feel already do require or reward such principles, we can not support this legislation.

As written, this bill would require projects, which are preserving or restoring the very resources that many are trying to protect with smart growth, to go through an extra review, whereas state-funded projects to build a new mini-mall, industrial park, or highway would not have to go through such a review. If anything, projects which protect farmland, open space, and historic properties, or restore brownfields, should be exempted from extra reviews, not singled out for them.

Bill 6469 - AAC Smart Growth and State Planning: We are opposed to Sections 3 and 4 of Bill 6596, which would charge the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) at UConn with establishing a program of state-wide geographic system mapping, and eliminate the state's Geospatial Information System Council. We strongly support a coordinated approach to GIS, and we have the highest regard for the critical work that CLEAR does, but this legislature established the GIS Council, which had already been operating without statutory authority, two years ago, and it is doing much of what this bill would charge CLEAR with doing. We wish the Council had made more progress, but any lack of progress is more a function of lack of resources than inherent defect in the approach. Eliminating that council and charging one state agency, even one as skilled as CLEAR, with discharging that council's responsibilities, especially without giving them significantly increased funding support, would be a serious step backwards in statewide planning.

(over)

Bill 6588 – AAC Training for Local Land Use Commissioners: We very much support CLEAR's role in providing education to local land use commissions, as proposed in Bill 6588. The Governor's budget proposes to eliminate \$150,000 in annual support through OPM for CLEAR's Land Use Academy. We are concerned with that agency's capacity to perform the duties in 6588 without such financial support, and urge this committee to work with the Appropriations Committee to ensure that this funding is retained.